



Gearing Up For Your Transitions

Criminal and Civil Law in the United States of America **High School Seniors**

Adapted from Dan Mahaney's The Courts, Teachers.net

The student will:

- A. Analyze the differences in criminal law and civil law.
- B. Differentiate between felonies and misdemeanors.
- C. Incorporate courtroom terminology into classroom activities.

Introduction – Context

The objective of this unit is to provide students with exposure to and information on laws and current legal practices in the United States. Laws are typically categorized by Criminal Law and Civil Law. Criminal Law is further broken into two sub-categories: Felonies and Misdemeanors. The student will further be exposed to legal terminology commonly used in judicial proceedings in the United States of America. The student will be led into discussions, analysis and illustrations of legal scenarios and judicial proceedings. .

Instruction

The student will:

- A. Explain differences in criminal law and civil law using proper legal terminology.
- B. Explain differences in felonies and misdemeanors using proper legal terminology.
- C. Analyze court cases and decide what legal decision the court is being asked to render.

The Instructor will:

- A. Provide information to students on the differences between criminal law and civil law while introducing proper legal terminology.
- B. Provide information to students on the differences between felonies and misdemeanors while introducing proper legal terminology.
- C. Provide technology opportunities such PowerPoint, WebQuest and student led internet research.
- D. Provide illustrations, structured group activities and roundtable discussions on the differences between criminal law and civil law and the differences between felonies and misdemeanors.

Materials and Media:

- A. Multimedia presentations such as videos and video streaming for viewing examples of legal issues and judicial proceedings.
- B. PowerPoint for presenting visual examples of breakdown and graphic organizers of laws and judicial proceedings.
- C. Internet for research and WebQuest of laws and roles of courts.

Assessments:

- A. Essential Questions discussion
- B. Teacher Observation of discussion and group participation
- C. Weekly quizzes
- D. 6 week test

LESSON PLAN

Goal: The student will analyze the differences in criminal law and civil law.

1. Objective:

Compare the differences between criminal law and civil law.

A. Criminal law involves the wrong against society.

B. Civil law involves the perceived wrong against an individual or group.

2. Introduction:

We have thus far spent quite a bit of time discussing what happens to a person when they violate a law. Today we are going to begin exploring United States laws. Over the next few days we will examine different types of laws that society has decided we must follow. Laws are basically divided into two categories: Criminal Laws and Civil Laws. Can someone give me an example of a Criminal Law? How about a Civil Law? Civil Laws are harder to express than criminal laws aren't they. Civil Law is based on ideas of how a reasonable person should respond in a given situation. Civil Law asks the Judge or jury to decide if a person, government, corporation or other entity acted properly in a given situation. Criminal laws are based generally on British Common Law. Criminal Laws attempt to express what society views as acceptable and unacceptable behavior. Criminal laws are much like school or classroom rules. As we have explored, society's views on what is considered "right and wrong" can change daily, dependent on the day's top news story. What we may consider acceptable today may be unacceptable tomorrow. Would someone give me an example of something that used to be against the law

that is now legal? Torts also change over time. How society expects a reasonable person to react in a situation can also change daily. Today we are going to begin defining and categorizing laws and exploring how they may affect our lives and the lives of Criminal Justice professionals.

3. Instruction:

A. By linking to previous discussions of amendments and landmark court cases associated with those amendments, the students have established schema to make educated assumptions of how society's standards can change and influence government standards. Students have also demonstrated knowledge of how media can influence society's standards for its government.

B. Using lecture and a PowerPoint presentation, the students will be exposed to the definitions of Criminal and Civil Law and a visual representation of the contemporary examples of new terms will be utilized.

4. Strategies for Higher Order Learning:

- A. Seated lecture time
- B. Instructor led discussion
- C. Visuals provided by PowerPoint

5. Practice and/or Review:

Review for this lesson will come in future discussions regarding Criminal and Civil Laws in the United States. The students will be given essential questions and group discussion topics to apply the information given. Internet opportunities will be given to search the State of Delaware website to further apply the knowledge.

6. Monitor and Adjust:

By listening to student feedback and by observation, adjustments will be made to focus and redirect questions and unclear information. Modifications will be provided based on IEP requirements.

7. Re-teaching:

In the likelihood that students do not understand Criminal and Civil Laws in America, redirection and review will be provided with positive feedback. This standard and objectives will also be revisited and reviewed in future units such as Mock Trials, role-play traffic stops and felony arrest demonstrations.

8. Materials/Media and their use:

A. PowerPoint presentation for visual enhancement of legal terms.

9. Alternative / Supplemental Activities:

A. Printed student copy of legal terms, if needed for notes.

B. Additional time to research differences in Criminal and Civil Law

10. Assessment:

A. Teacher observation of student feedback and interest.

B. Weekly Quiz over content.

11. Arrangement:

A. Tables are arranged in row seating, students are seated with their pre-assigned groups.

B.. PowerPoint and presentation system

C. Access to student computers if necessary

12. Closure:

Can you see now through this brief introduction that American Laws are basically broken into Criminal and Civil Laws? Can someone give me an example of a violation of Criminal Law? Can someone else tell me a brief scenario where a person may commit a Tort? Tomorrow we will begin a more in depth exploration of Criminal Laws in the United States and see how those laws are further broken into categories.